

Introduced by Senator Kehoe

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Senate Joint Resolution No. 6—Relative to survivors of torture.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 6, as introduced, Kehoe. Survivors of torture.

This measure would declare June 26, 2011, a Day in Support of Victims of Torture in California, and would urge the Office of Refugee Resettlement to direct torture treatment funding through the Torture Victims Relief Act.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, Approximately 100,000 residents of the State of
- 2 California have found refuge here after enduring politically
- 3 motivated torture in their home countries; and
- 4 WHEREAS, These survivors of torture bring their remarkable
- 5 fortitude, resiliency, and powerful personal histories to their new
- 6 state; and
- 7 WHEREAS, Many of these survivors have contributed greatly
- 8 to California's communities, economy, cultural vibrancy, and
- 9 understanding of the importance of human rights through opening
- 10 businesses, performing professional services, founding charitable
- 11 organizations, speaking out about their experiences, and
- 12 volunteering on behalf of others; and

1 WHEREAS, These contributions come in spite of the lingering
2 physical, emotional, and social impacts of enduring torture; and

3 WHEREAS, Studies and clinical reports on the consequences
4 of torture have been found to include, but are not limited to,
5 scarring, disfiguration, chronic pain, nightmares, insomnia,
6 flashbacks, hypervigilance, difficulty forming relationships of
7 trust, depression, panic attacks, and startle responses; and

8 WHEREAS, Absent access to appropriate care, these ongoing
9 effects of torture can prevent or undermine the ability and desire
10 of torture survivors to restore their dignity and thrive as productive
11 members of their new California communities; and

12 WHEREAS, Treating the unique impact of torture on survivors
13 requires highly specialized, holistic treatment; and

14 WHEREAS, California played a key role in the development
15 of the torture treatment field in the late 1970s and early 1980s
16 under the leadership of Dr. Jose Quiroga and Ana Deutsch,
17 themselves refugees who fled from incidents of torture in Chile
18 and Argentina, respectively, came to Los Angeles, and there went
19 on to found the Program for Torture Victims (PTV) in order to
20 attend to the unique panoply of physical, emotional, and legal
21 challenges faced by their fellow survivors; and

22 WHEREAS, California today is home to the largest number of
23 torture treatment centers in the United States, including, but not
24 limited to, the affiliates of the California Consortium of Torture
25 Treatment Centers—the Center for Justice and Accountability in
26 San Francisco; the Center for Survivors of Torture at Asian
27 Americans for Community Involvement in San Jose; the Institute
28 for Redress and Recovery in Santa Clara University; the Institute
29 for the Study of Psychosocial Trauma in Palo Alto; Program for
30 Torture Victims in Los Angeles; the Torture Survivors Project at
31 the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles; Survivors International
32 in San Francisco; and Survivors of Torture, International in San
33 Diego; and

34 WHEREAS, These centers collectively serve around 1,000
35 torture survivors annually; and

36 WHEREAS, These torture treatment programs rely heavily on
37 the volunteerism of local professionals—among them doctors,
38 psychologists, psychiatrists, dentists, physical therapists,
39 interpreters, lawyers, masseurs, plastic surgeons, and others—to

1 provide holistic treatment far beyond the capacities of the centers’
2 limited staffs and budgets; and

3 WHEREAS, Each year hundreds of California professionals
4 donate thousands of hours of their time to acquire the necessary
5 specialized training and assist torture survivors to heal; and

6 WHEREAS, Each year hundreds of Californians make charitable
7 financial contributions to help make the services of these nonprofit
8 centers possible at no charge to the survivors; and

9 WHEREAS, The Mental Health Services Oversight and
10 Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) could use state-level
11 public sector avenues to improve regional services for torture
12 survivors by working with counties to include torture treatment in
13 county mental health plans reviewed by the MHSOAC; and

14 WHEREAS, Data from the federal Office of Refugee
15 Resettlement (ORR) demonstrates that California has been the top
16 destination for refugees who seek asylum in the United States, but
17 funding to provide adequate services for those refugees has been
18 insufficient because the federal Torture Victims Relief Act has not
19 been fully funded by Congress and ORR has not distributed
20 domestic torture treatment under the Torture Victims Relief Act
21 formulas to provide adequate funding areas that serve
22 disproportional populations of formerly tortured refugees; and

23 WHEREAS, On June 26, 1997, the United Nations General
24 Assembly marked the 10th anniversary of its adoption of the UN
25 Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or
26 Degrading Treatment or Punishment by establishing that date,
27 annually, as International Day in Support of Victims of Torture;
28 and

29 WHEREAS, The Legislature hereby acknowledges the
30 widespread presence of survivors of torture residing throughout
31 the State of California; and

32 WHEREAS, The Legislature welcomes and commends the
33 contributions survivors of torture make to California’s
34 communities, economy, and cultural vibrancy; and

35 WHEREAS, The Legislature expresses its pride in California’s
36 emerging legacy as a place of refuge and healing for those who
37 have endured torture; and

38 WHEREAS, The Legislature undertakes to encourage the further
39 development of torture treatment services throughout the state by

1 honoring professionals and volunteers who have dedicated their
2 time to the treatment of torture survivors; now, therefore, be it
3 *Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of*
4 *California, jointly*, That the Legislature urges ORR to direct torture
5 treatment funding through the Torture Victims Relief Act so as to
6 reflect California's role as the nation's largest resettlement
7 destination for humanitarian immigrants (25 percent of all refugees
8 since 1975, according to ORR and the California Refugee Programs
9 Bureau, and 34 percent of affirmative asylees in the last year,
10 according to the Department of Homeland Security's "Refugee
11 Flow Report"), many of whom are torture survivors; and be it
12 further
13 *Resolved*, That June 26, 2011, be declared a Day in Support of
14 Victims of Torture in California; and be it further
15 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
16 this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United
17 States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to each
18 Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the
19 Unites States, and to the author for appropriate distribution.